

THE

HISTORIAN

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HANCOCK COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM OF HANCOCK COUNTY
312 HIGHWAY 90
BAY ST. LOUIS, MS 39520-3595

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

November 1996

NOVEMBER HAPPENING

The next Historical Society meeting will be held at the Kate Lobrano House on November 21st at noon. George Welman will show a short video about Hancock County. It was produced for presentation all across America promoting Hancock County and depicts the delights of living on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Election of officers for 1997 will be held at this meeting. The offices to be filled are Recording Secretary, Publicity and Membership. Any member of the society is eligible to nominate another member or be nominated from the floor at that time. For reservations at \$5, call 467-4090 no later than Tuesday, November 19th. Please try to make the deadline to help the ladies plan and prepare the food.

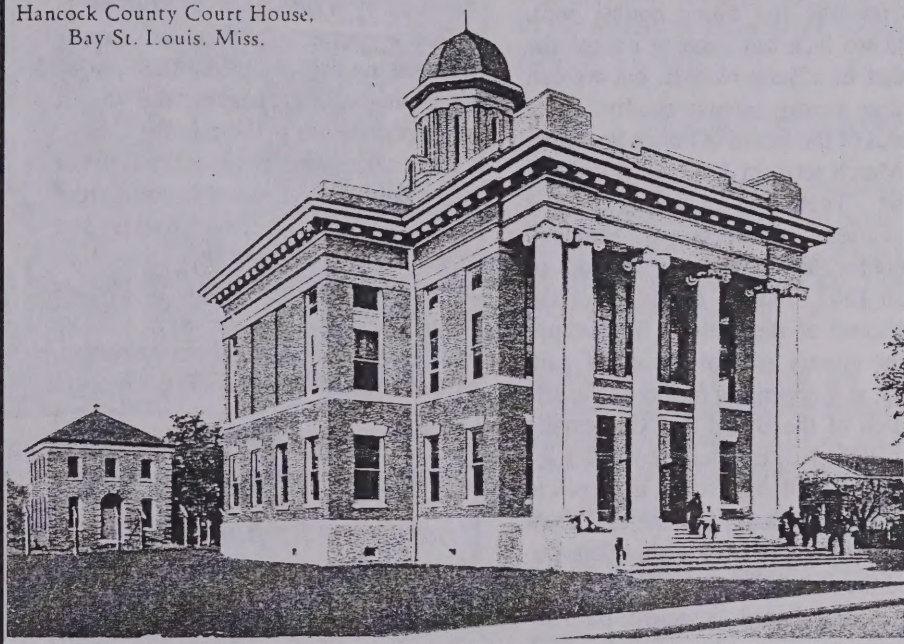
4TH ANNUAL HALLOWEEN TREAT IS A GREAT SUCCESS

The Halloween celebration which was held in Cedar Rest Cemetery was an overwhelming success. We had hoped to have at least 400 guests tour the cemetery during the evening. We have no accurate count except the we took in nearly 800 dollars in donations. We had suggested a donation of one dollar per person at the entrance. In addition we received several very nice donations by people who annually visit Bay Saint Louis and the Lobrano House at this time of year.

Patt Cucullu did an incredible job of handling publicity and lighting for the event. Her suggestion of using beverage bottles as chimneys for the light was a great improvement over the paper bags we used on previous occasions.

(Continued on page 3)

Hancock County Court House,
Bay St. Louis, Miss.



THE HANCOCK COUNTY COURTHOUSE SHOWING ITS COPULA
AND THE JAILHOUSE AT THE REAR

HANCOCK COUNTY AND ITS COURTHOUSES

In the recent election there was a non-binding referendum approved by a margin of 6517 to 5754 favoring the construction of a new Hancock County courthouse. This is certainly not the first time that the people of Hancock County have been faced with this decision.

Hancock County was established in 1812. Five years later, in 1817, the first courthouse was built at Center, which later became Caesar. The county government remained there for twenty years - until the courthouse and county seat were moved to Gainesville

in 1837.

At this time, Hancock County included nearly all of present day Harrison, Pearl River and Stone counties, making it difficult for residents of Biloxi, for instance, to travel the poor roads to their county seat. Subsequently Hancock was divided into east and west portions in 1841 forming Harrison County as the eastern half.

On March 31, 1853, the Gainesville courthouse burned. However, court evidently was held on the "first Monday after the fourth Monday in April A.D. 1861, in the town of Gainesville".

(continued on page 2)

(Courthouse from page 1)

The records then show that no meeting was held for four years (during the Civil War). On May 1st., 1865, an attempt was made to hold court in Buck Branch, in the present territory of Pearl River County, but Judge John Hancock failed to appear.

About this time the question of the transfer of the county seat to Shieldsboro (later Bay Saint Louis) was being warmly argued. In 1867 an act of the state legislature authorized an election to determine the future county seat. Again we lack any account except the dry fact in official records, but we can imagine a very intense rivalry. The minutes of the Board of Police for a special March term in 1867 show the following: "Whereas at an election held at the various precincts of Hancock County for the 3rd Monday, 18th day of March 1867, under a recent act of the Legislature of the State of Mississippi for the county seat of justice of said county, at it appearing further to the satisfaction of the Board that Gainesville retained the highest number of votes for the said seat of Justice. It is therefore ordered by the Board that the said town of Gainesville be and is this date declared the seat of Justice of this county."

The county board, obviously partisan in the matter, did not have the last word, as shown by records of the circuit court for the first Monday after the fourth Monday in April of the same year.

"Board of Police of Hancock County. On motion of preemptory mandeaus to proceed to provide public buildings and establish the seat of Justice at Shieldsborough."

My research indicates that the building then used as "an existing courthouse" was located on the site of the old Mauffray home at 210 Main Street. Legend has it that the Bay courthouse had concrete sidewalks. Many citizens from the country would not walk upon the sidewalks when they did their business, because they had never seen a sidewalk before and did not know its function.

On May 20, 1893, the Sea Coast Echo reported, "The Courthouse of Hancock

is a large two story frame building 50 X 70, which was erected in 1874, at a cost of \$6,000. The court, jury and consultation rooms are upstairs, while the offices are on the ground floor, and these are supplied with fire-proof vaults and all-steel safes, thus rendering the county's records absolutely secure.

"There is in the same yard a brick jail, (visible in photo) fitted with steel cells, and the peculiar fence with which it is enclosed makes it almost impossible for a prisoner to escape. The courthouse is manned by a good and careful set of officers, none of whom are more painstaking and competent than Jas. F. Cozenenvee (Cazeneuve), the sheriff and tax collector of the county.

"The courthouse is not of brick nor of stone but of wood, wood from the roof to the floorsills and considering its cost and size, it is the most attractive looking courthouse in the state of Mississippi."

In 1910 at the time of the construction of the present building, H.S. Weston

"...they had never seen a sidewalk, before and did not know its function."

was president of the board of supervisors, and S. J. Craft, J. E. Smith, T. J. McArthur, L.C. Bourgeois were "associate members". A. J. Carver was sheriff, and E. H. Hoffman was clerk. Thumbnail History, Hancock County Courthouse by Jim Pfeiffer, details the new courthouse which was begun that year.

"In July, plans submitted by Kenning & Weiss, New Orleans architects, were approved for building a new courthouse, not to exceed the sum of \$25,000. Jett Bros. Contracting Co. of Alabama won the contract for construction with a bid of \$24,989, which included granite steps at \$650. However, before construction started, the plans were changed to eliminate the fire escapes, at a saving of \$60.

"Napoleon Caron was low bidder for moving the old courthouse out of the way. His bid, to move the building and vault 76 feet to the east side of the

grounds, for \$650. John Henry, only applicant for the job, was hired as Construction Superintendent with compensation set at two per cent of the cost.

"The contract with Jett Bros. was signed August 1, 1910, with contract time 8 months. Actual starting date is uncertain, but first payment under the contract, for \$3, 120, was made October 4, 1910.

"Although the courthouse was built from the general county fund, the supervisors on Dec. 6, 1910 borrowed \$10,000 from Hancock Bank. They issued five warrants of \$2,000 each, payable one each year for five years. The courthouse was formally accepted by the board September 20, 1911. John Henry was employed to move the safe and furniture from the old building into the new, Jett Bros. was paid \$50 for placing a marble cornerstone containing the names of the supervisors, and Alonzo B. Hayden provided "sundry articles for the toilet rooms" for \$28.

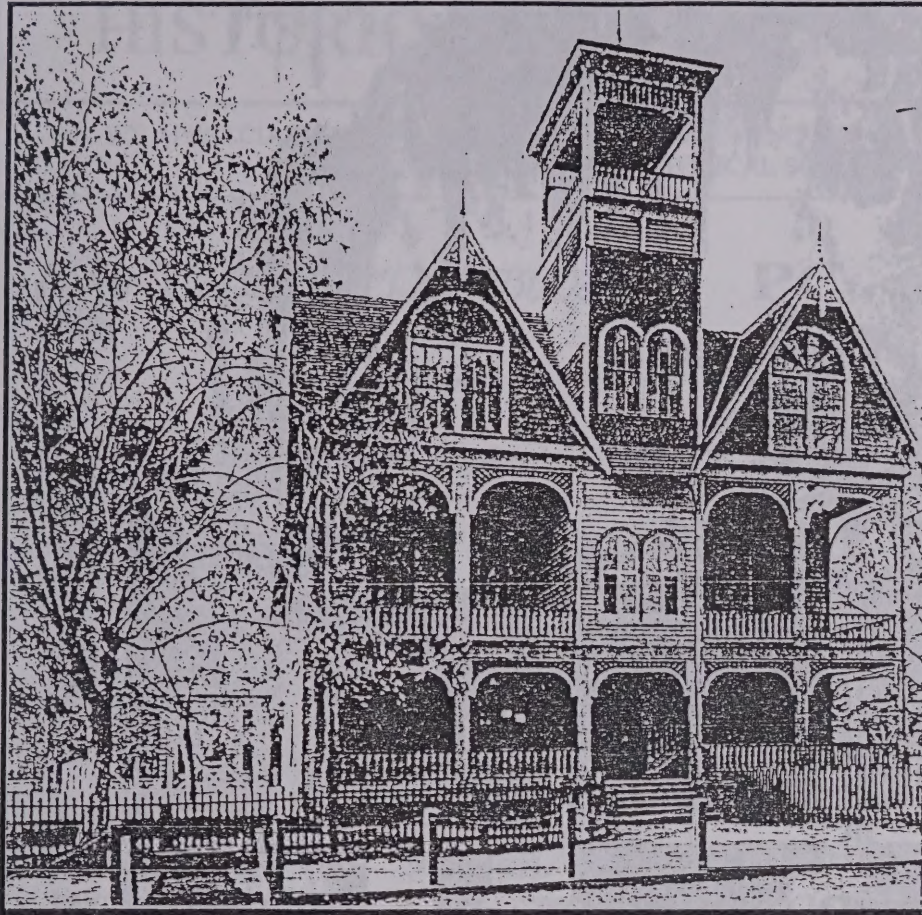
"Napoleon Caron bought the old courthouse at auction for \$150, and the pickets and posts from the fence around the courthouse grounds were sold to J.E. Saucier for \$5.

"To complete the transition, the following were purchased for court and jury rooms: Three dozen chairs, four dozen cuspidors, two dozen sheets, and a dozen each of single beds, mattresses, pillow and blankets."

The present building suffered severe roof damage during Hurricane Camille. The beautiful copula had been destroyed and I am told that most of its support structure was removed during the renovation. In addition, some very decorative work along the eave-line was not replaced leaving the overall appearance a bit more somber.

Greek Revival architecture is in good taste and is enhanced by age. One need only consider the vulgarity of "modern" civic buildings in other nearby counties to appreciate our building. This building is not our only option, but if we replace it, the new structure should have enduring architectural merit. Space alone isn't sufficient reason.

Charles H. Gray



HANCOCK COUNTY COURTHOUSE 1874 TO 1911
THE JAILHOUSE IS VISIBLE TO THE LEFT REAR OF THE BUILDING

(HALLOWEEN from page 1)

JoAnn Mumme did a marvelous job of organizing and directing the tour guides. We feel confident of this because as of this date we have no reports of anyone who is still missing.

Edith Back researched the stories and legends about the people buried in the cemetery and matched them perfectly with the people who portrayed them. She was in the hospital having a broken arm set and came out of the operating room reporting that her nurse, Crystal Labat would portray her aunt, Portia Labat.

We had great publicity. As always, Nan Ehrbright of the Sun Herald and Ellis Cuevas of the Sea Coast Echo wrote and published glowing articles about our project, which certainly contributed to the extraordinary turnout. We appreciate your support and offer a very special thanks to both of you, Nan and Ellis.

Every actor and every guide gave award-winning performances.

Mayor Edward Favre, as always, immediately and cheerfully approved our request to use the cemetery. His staff headed by Jimmy Loiacano cleaned the cemetery beautifully and provided us with sand ballast for the lights. Thank you Jimmy.

Ron Vanney had his crew repaired a bad dip in the sidewalk at Loblano House before Halloween. We greatly appreciated it because we feared for guests arriving in the dark.

Hostesses at the Loblano house were Margaret Arnos, Virginia Ludwig, Doris Gendusa, Ruth Chambers, Mollie Malpie and Joyce Schexnayder.

June Bell's homemade cookies were gobbled by the goblins with relish.

The punch may have been served from a caldron and dispensed in paper cups for Halloween, but it was served with a

PROJECTION SCREEN DONATED TO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mary Lou and Lynn Cucullu donated a 70 inch long projection screen to the society in memory of Lynn's parents, Lionel and Eugenie Cucullu. It is permanently mounted on our stage, always ready for use. Thank you Lynn and Mary Lou.

KATHERINE LOBRANO MEMORIAL

Clayton Borne who comes every year for our cemetery tour made a most generous donation to the society in memory of his grandmother, Katherine Loblano.

OTHER DONATIONS

Ames Kergosein seems to possess an endless trove of historic items. His latest display is several framed commemorative postal issues, one being the last day of the Logtown post office on September 30, 1963.

Emile Stieffel exercised his considerable woodworking talent on our behalf once more and made a beautiful pair of stands for our coffee urns at the Loblano House.

LOBRANO HOUSE HOURS

MONDAY	8 a.m.
through	to
FRIDAY	4 p.m.

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

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Charles H. Gray
Edith Back

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HANCOCK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

108 Cue Street or P.O. Box 312
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Telephone/Fax [601] 467-4090
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117 deMontluzin Street, Bay St. Louis,
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The Colonial mansion known as the O. J. Key house was built on a Spanish land grant. In 1963, L. L. Kergosien and Son remodeled the old structure, adding buildings and connecting them with the existing structure to form court yards with galleries overlooking a swimming pool and recreation areas. There are seven luxury apartments in the main building and a forty unit addition on the property.

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WE APPRECIATE THE SUPPORT THAT THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS HAVE GIVEN TO THE
HANCOCK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



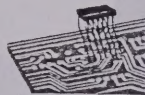
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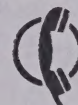
Maggie Hayden, CRB, CRS
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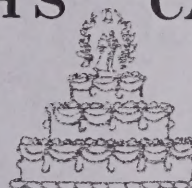
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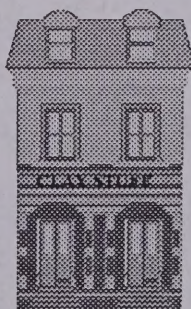
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HANCOCK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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